DEMOCRATIC
GERMAN REPORT

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CRIME RATE HALVED

Democratic Germany Plans Legal Reform

The crime rate in the German Democratic Republic has been halved between 1949 and 1955, it was officially announced in Berlin on May 10th.

The rapid decline in the crime rate, and the stabilisation of the social system make it possible to introduce far-reaching reforms in the penal system. Some of these reforms, to be put into effect in the near future, were announced at a conference of judges and attorneys held in Berlin on May 10th.

The main line of the reforms will be to emphasise more clearly the educational value of court sentences, rather than their deterrent effect.

At present courts in the German Democratic Republic have three possibilities of punishment: the death penalty, prison sentences, and fines. Legislation will shortly be presented to the People's Chamber to introduce two new forms of punishment: "Conditional sentencing" (a form of probation), and "public reprimand". Exact details of the form these new sentences will take will be announced soon.

The aim of these two new punishments is to make it possible for minor offenders to continue with their normal work, instead of confining them in prison.

At the same time steps are being taken to ensure the proper use of prison sentences mainly as a means of re-education. Big steps in this direction have already been taken in the past few years, so that at present three-quarters of all prisoners are engaged on productive work during their imprisonment, instead of pasting paper bags, the traditional employment for persons confined in German prisons. This process of employing prisoners on productive work will now be speeded up, and further measures will be taken to improve prison libraries and provide more film shows and concerts, etc.

New legislation is also being prepared on the subject of previous convictions. Under German law as at present applied, previous convictions dating back as far as twenty years are still taken into consideration. The new legislation will cut this period sharply, so that

(cont. on next page)

MANSTEIN TO ADVISE NEW WEHRMACHT

Nazi war criminal Field Marshal Erich von Manstein will be asked to "advise" the Defence Committee of the West German Parliament on military affairs, it was announced in West Germany on May 13th.

Field Marshal Manstein was sentenced to 18 years imprisonment by a British military court in December 1949 after he had been found guilty of executing partisans and participating in the murder of many Jews and Gypsies. He was released "on medical grounds" in August 1952.

Manstein will be asked to give parliamentarians advice on such subjects as military strategy for the new West German Wehrmacht, the length of the call-up, and the development of modern armaments.

"NO-CALL-UP" PLAN LAUNCHED

The East and West German Governments should agree not to introduce conscription in their respective states, East German Deputy Prime Minister Walter Ulbricht proposed on May 12th.

Walter Ulbricht, who is also First Secretary of the Socialist Unity Party, suggested this "no call-up' agreement could be one of a number of measures which could be taken immediately to help reduce tension between the two halves of Germany.

He proposed that representatives of the (East) German Democratic Republic and the (West) German Federal Republic should meet to discuss the following points:

1. **Limitation of the armed forces of both states.**
2. **No conscription to be introduced in either state.**
3. **A ban on the stationing of atomic weapons on German soil.**
4. **A ban on war propaganda and racial propaganda in both states.**

Such a short-term programme could do much to reduce tension in Germany and in Europe, Walter Ulbricht stated.

On a longer perspective, Germany must be reunified and this could only be achieved by talks between the two German states, he said. Since Chancellor Adenauer had rejected such talks, all those forces in West Germany which desired unity would have to get together to ensure that Adenauer's party would be decisively defeated at the next West German general elections in 1957.

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someone who served a prison sentence in his youth will not be prejudiced by this for a large part of his life. Under the new legislation previous sentences will be expunged from the register after a relatively short period.

The jurists attending the conference also discussed legislative measures to ensure that relatively minor offences or common crimes are not in future treated as sabotage or treason.

In the past, for instance, theft from nationally-owned enterprises has sometimes been treated as sabotage or an offence against the state, instead of simply as an offence against property. Legislation will now be introduced to draw the line sharply between such common crimes, and the much more serious cases of genuine sabotage, espionage or treason.

Addressing the meeting of jurists, Attorney General Dr Ernst Melsheimer outlined the reasons for these far-reaching developments. He said:

"In the past eleven years we have had great successes in the creation of a democratic system of justice and a socialist judicial system. The old fascist judges and prosecutors were removed, and a new generation of workers and peasants were trained as judges and state attorneys.

"In summer 1945 we began with the punishment of the nazis and the war criminals, and the courts did much to establish a firm basis for our antifascist and democratic social order. In this first stage the courts also dealt with attempts to sabotage the land reform and the creation of nationally-owned factories, and fought the black market.

"The second stage of the activity of our courts was mainly devoted to the protection of the social and state order in the German Democratic Republic. They had to deal with an increasingly dangerous wave of crimes such as espionage, war propaganda and terrorism. Gradually the judicial system, apart from just protecting the social order, began to take a larger part in the process of re-education.

"As a result of economic improvements in the German Democratic Republic, and the stabilisation of the power of the workers and peasants, the crime rate was practically halved between 1949 and 1955.

"Today, in view of these developments, and the political developments in the whole world, we are faced with different tasks than those which confronted us in 1946 or 1952."

Attorney General Melsheimer then outlined the new legislation which is being prepared to meet this new situation. He criticised people who wanted to use the full weight of state authority to deal with such offenders as rumour mongers. "It is naturally easier to deal with a 'hate-propagandist' by locking him up: what we have to do, however, is to convince him and teach him a lesson", Dr Melsheimer said.

The Attorney General emphasised that the judicial authorities must adhere absolutely to the principle that every man must be presumed innocent until his guilt was proved. There must be no arrests made simply on suspicion: persons must only be arrested with a warrant and when there was serious evidence of their guilt, and only held on remand if they were likely to flee from justice.

At the same time, the Attorney General warned, the full weight of the law would be used against spies, saboteurs and terrorists who attacked the building of socialism in the German Democratic Republic.

GAOLED FOR XMAS PARTY

A young West German girl has been sent to prison for 22 months because she organised, among other activities, a Christmas party for children.

The girl, Lore Schacht, aged 20, was found guilty by Dortmund District Court of "forming a secret society" and "activities endangering the state".

Here is a list of her "dangerous" activities as they were detailed by the prosecution:

"On November 2nd 1955 she organised a parents' evening at which children danced and sang and the parents agreed to formed a cultural group."

"On December 5th 1955 she applied to the authorities in Wattenscheid for the children's 'Young Pioneers' organisation to be registered as a public organisation.

"She received through the post (from the German Democratic Republic) printed material of the Free German Youth.

"... at the end of 1955 she travelled with a group of Young Pioneers to the Soviet Occupied Zone.

"At Christmas 1953 she organised a Christmas Party for children, and arranged the programme. From the programme for this Christmas party it may be seen that a Christmas play was presented, and she held a political speech."

* * *

The imprisonment of Lore Schacht for organising a progressive children's club is no isolated incident in West Germany today. In summer 1955 Georg Gampfer, Secretary of the German-Soviet Friendship Society in West Germany was sent to prison for three years for "preparation to commit high treason." The charges against him included the fact that he had "distributed a book on Leonardo da Vinci written by two Soviet authors which is written in a materialist and atheist spirit and attacks the Catholic church."

Provisional figures show that more than one thousand persons have been sentenced to prison in West Germany in the past three years for "political crimes" similar to those detailed above, or for such offences as organising the collection of signatures against the formation of the new West German Wehrmacht. In many cases the accused have been held in prison for two or three years before being brought to trial.

"Release Political Prisoners" — President's Call

President Wilhelm Pieck of the German Democratic Republic has called on West German President Theodor Heuss to release all political prisoners held in the Federal Republic for their "anti-militaristic, democratic and socialist" activities.

President Pieck, in a letter which he addressed to President Heuss on May 18th, pointed out that he had already pardoned a large number of persons who had been convicted of criminal anti-state activities in the German Democratic Republic. "The German Democratic Republic has taken a number of steps to achieve a relaxation of tension" President Pieck stated; "all Germans now await similar action by the Federal Republic."

WHO DELIVERS THE GOODS?

Socialist Unity and Social Democratic Achievements Compared

(In April 1946 the Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party in East Germany, having learned the lesson that unity is strength, came together to amalgamate in the Socialist Unity Party. On the tenth anniversary of the amalgamation Otto Grotewohl, former Social Democratic leader who is now Prime Minister of the German Democratic Republic, compared the programmes published by the Socialist Unity Party in 1946 and by the old-style Social Democratic Party in West Germany in the same year, and analysed how they had been fulfilled. Below we present his assessment, made in a speech in Berlin on April 21st 1956.)

The action programme of the Socialist Unity Party, dated April 1946, posed important demands. Today, ten years later, we can see what has become of those demands.

1. Punishment of those responsible for the war, and war criminals. Purging of fascists and reactionaries from office and public life.

This demand has been fulfilled.

2. Removal of the capitalist monopolies. Confiscation of the factories of fascists and those responsible for the war.

This demand has been fulfilled.

3. Destruction of reactionary militarism and the power of large landowners, and the carrying out of a democratic land reform.

This demand has been fulfilled.

4. Reconstruction of the administration on the basis of democratic elections.

This demand has been fulfilled.

5. The transfer of all public services, mineral resources, mines, banks and insurance companies into the hands of the local authorities or an all-German government.

This demand has been fulfilled — except for the creation of an all-German government.

6. Rebuilding of the economy and stabilisation of the currency on the basis of economic planning.

This demand has been fulfilled.

7. Democratic tax reform. The rich should bear the greater part of the burden left by the war.

This demand has been fulfilled.

8. Security of democratic rights. Freedom of opinion in word, picture and writing, with due protection of the security of the democratic state against reactionary attacks. Equality for all citizens before the law, without distinction of race or sex. Full equal rights for women. Democratic reform of justice.

This demand has been fulfilled.

9. Recognition of factory councils as the legal representatives of the workers. Equal participation for factory councils in all factory and production problems.

This demand has been fulfilled: but in the German Democratic Republic it is not just a question of "equal participation", since the workers are now the owners of the factories.

10. Eight hour day as legal normal working day.

This demand has been fulfilled. We are now preparing step by step the introduction of the seven hour day.

11. Democratic reform of the entire educational system. Education of youth in a spirit of progressive democracy, international friendship and true humanity.

This demand has been fulfilled.

12. Establishment of the unity of Germany as an antifascist parliamentary democratic republic.

This demand will be fulfilled when the German working class acts in unison.

Those are the results of our work in the last ten years.

And what has the Social Democratic Party done (in West Germany) in the same ten years to fulfil its programme? Let us consider this question in detail.

The programme of the 1st Party Congress of the Social Democratic Party in Hanover in May 1946 stated:

1. Socialisation must begin with the natural resources and the basic industries. All mines, iron and steel plants . . . and ownership of all large scale industry is to be transferred to the community.

We ask our Social Democratic comrades in West Germany: Has this demand been fulfilled? No.

2. It is necessary to encourage the ideas of the cooperative movement . . . cooperation in craftsmanship, trade and agriculture.

Has this demand been fulfilled? No.

3. The entire transport system, credit system and insurance must be objects of socialist planning .

Has this demand been fulfilled? No.

4. A far-reaching agrarian and land reform is to be undertaken immediately, and large landlords must be dispossessed.

Has this demand been fulfilled? No.

5. In the field of state and administration policy the Social Democrats demand a democratic system based on the aid and responsibility of all citizens.

Has this demand been fulfilled? No.

6. All citizens must be granted the chance of education in accordance with their capacity.

Has this demand been fulfilled? No.

7. German social democracy desires a socialist Germany in a socialist Europe.

Has this demand been fulfilled? No.

Production Up — But Not Enough

Industrial production in the German Democratic Republic was seven percent up on 1955 figures in the first three months of this year, but despite this big increase the plan targets were not met in many basic industries, it was announced in Berlin on May 10th. An overall figure showed that total industrial production was five percent below plan targets.

A large part of the lag was due to the extremely cold weather during the first three months, which had a particularly bad effect on the production of lignite, which is all dug by the overcast method, and also on transport.

Near East Visit

An official government delegation from the German Democratic Republic, headed by Deputy Prime Minister Heinrich Rau has just made an extensive tour of the Middle East .

During its tour the delegation had trade talks with the heads of government and with trade officials in Sudan, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt.

1946: "The Murderers Are Amongst Us"

1950: "The Council of the Gods"

1952: "The Condemned Village"

TEN YEARS

Democrati

Fight Against

Over 100 full-length films have been produced by DEFA, the state-owned East German film company, since its formation in May 1946, just ten years ago.

Some of these films have been very good, some have been very bad, and some just indifferent, but not a single one of them made propaganda for crime, war, or racial hatred.

The most outstanding feature of the work of DEFA has been the production of a whole series of first class anti-fascist and anti-militarist films, and on this page we present pictures from some of the best of these.

First came "The Murderers Are Amongst Us", the first post-war film made anywhere in Germany, and still one of the best. This film, which was shown with great success in 24 different countries, including Britain and the United States, bared the monstrous crimes of nazi Germany, and showed the first beginnings of a new life in democratic Germany.

It was followed by a number of other first-class films, including, in 1950, "The Council of the Gods", which showed dramatically the role of German heavy industry in bringing Hitler to power, the postwar trials of such war criminals, and the beginnings of their re-installation in power in West Germany.

By 1952 West Germany was being converted into the jumping off place for a new war, and DEFA was up-to-the-minute again with the film "The Condemned Village", showing how West German villagers, led amongst others by their priest, were organising to prevent their fields being seized to build an American air base.

In the following years some of the best and most successful DEFA films were devoted to the fighting history of the German working class. One of the very best of these was "Stronger than the Night", the story of those brave German Communists, who, despite suppression and isolation, went on fighting the nazis inside Germany throughout the whole Hitler period.

In 1954 and 1955 DEFA produced the monumental two part biographical film

DEFA FILMS

...rman Films

...cism and War

"Ernst Thaelmann", which not only sketched the life of the German Communist leader who was murdered by the nazis in 1944, but also presented a panorama of German history for the past 35 years.

Finally, our last picture shows a scene from "Thirst" (Mich Duerstet), a film which has just been completed and not yet shown. The theme of this new film is the fight of the Spanish people against fascism in 1936–39, and the international help given to them in their fight.

* * *

Not all the films made by DEFA have such serious themes, however. DEFA has also produced a number of very successful dramatic films, musicals and fairy stories. But looking back on the successes of the past ten years, it is clear that there is a bad gap in the production programme: DEFA has produced almost no successful comedies and farces. This is a matter which is now receiving very serious attention, and film-goers have been promised more to laugh at in the future.

* * *

DEFA films have been seen since 1946 in the cinemas of 43 countries in East and West. The most DEFA films have been seen in Rumania (67); but a number of western countries have also imported a considerable number: Britain (14), Holland (21), Sweden (10) and West Germany (25).

* * *

The work of DEFA is not confined to the making of full-length programme films. During its ten years of existence the DEFA studios have turned out 190 documentaries and 806 scientific instructional films, many of very high quantity. 300 foreign films have been synchronised in German.

* * *

Films are now shown regularly in almost every town and village in the German Democratic Republic. All towns and larger villages have of course their own permanent cinemas, but in addition mobile cinemas bring a minimum of one film show a week to every village in the Republic, with the exception of 200 of the smallest hamlets. A total of 1955 mobile teams provide 10,409 of these weekly shows.

1954: "Stronger Than The Night"

1954–1955: "Ernst Thaelmann"

1956: "Thirst"

SPORTING HOLIDAY IN BERLIN

By Leslie Keith

(The writer of this article is a Londoner, a member of the London Typographical Society and of the Southern Elite Cycling Club.)

East Berlin was in festive mood on Tuesday May 8th. Firstly, it was a holiday in celebration of Germany's liberation from fascism; secondly, that day's stage in the Warsaw—Berlin Prague Peace Cycle Race terminated at the Walter Ulbricht Stadium, and thirdly, Gustav Adolf Schur, leading East German road racing cyclist, was at the head of the individual general classification at the start of this stage.

Among the hundreds of thousands lining the streets, and more particularly among the 70,000 to 80,000 spectators who assembled in the stadium shortly after noon, I was probably the only disappointed enthusiast at the end of the day.

I had been optimistically anticipating that the British riders would recover some of the time lost the day before; but announcements made during the race did not include our riders' names in the leading breakaway group, so it was clear that they were having further setbacks.

But don't think I had a dull or depressing afternoon. On the contrary, there was entertainment in plenty. Just after half past twelve there was a rugby international match between the German Democratic Republic and Czechoslovakia which ended in a draw of three points each. My sympathies were with the players engaged in this, to them, important match in front of a vast crowd who knew little and cared less about rugby, but who certainly were soccer fans. It must have been distinctly discouraging for them.

Following a dog-trials display, the light-hearted, bantering attitude soon changed when the football match began. It was between a combined Berlin Vorwaerts Central and Dynamo Sports Clubs team and the Prague Red Star team. The Berlin side won a clear 3 : 0 victory, but despite the three goals, I think Dulwich Hamlet or Bishop Auckland would have shown both these goal-shy teams what to do with a ball in front of the goal.

As if to relax the onlookers for the dramatic climax of the entry of the gladiators, a mass junior gymnastics display followed. It was a somewhat self-conscious and unpolished performance which, however, did not obscure the obvious delight of the youngsters at appearing on such an important occasion.

All these events were interspersed with comments on the progress of the race, the Berliners being torn between their anxiety over the fact that Schur was a long way behind the leading bunch and their delight that two other East German riders were making the pace up front.

Lothar, Meister II — there are two Lothar Meisters in the East German team — and Luder maintained their efforts and entered the stadium at the head of the group to take first and second places amidst a thunder of applause and cheering.

Master of Sport Gustav Adolf Schur had unfortunately been involved in a crash earlier in the day which had affected about twenty riders. He had gone on, but steadily lost time on the leading bunch. This almost certainly lost Schur his chance of winning the whole race for the second year in succession.

However, these changing fortunes of the East German riders were not nearly so disastrous as those of the British team, three of whom dropped out of the race altogether at this stage. Very disappointing for all concerned, of course, but a tribute at the same time to the very high level of performance called for in the tough, most important amateur stage race in the world.

The significance of this year's race, in which teams of six riders from twenty-four nations competed, is that it offered a full comparison between riders from the traditional strongholds of cycle-racing, such as Italy, France, Belgium and Holland, and those of countries where it has only developed since the war — Poland, the Soviet Union, Rumania, the German Democratic Republic etc.

The surprise (perhaps it should be no surprise) of this year has undoubtedly been the Soviet team, while East German riders have gain acquitted themselves well. Neither individual riders nor teams were able to establish a comfortable position from which to dictate the tactics of the race. There was no let-up from start to finish.

In the German Democratic Republic this annual event is regarded as of first importance in the cycle racing calendar, and the cycling section of the East German sports association plans its events and the activities of potential Peace Race riders from the earliest weeks of each year in preparation for it.

A number of single stage massed-start events, in which club teams are entered, leading up to an international stage race two weeks before the Peace Race, with two East German teams competing, ensure that there is nothing haphazard about training and selection.

Thus the activities of the cycling clubs and riders are co-ordinated from the beginning of the season. Riders get to know each other's styles, trainers plan the work and managers discuss strategy and tactics with their men.

A full career as a racing cyclist here is open to all who have the ability and determination, without the worries of getting time off from work, financial problems in the matter of equipment and training, or the grim struggle in the professional sphere.

Outstanding ability, as in the case of Gustav Adolf Schur, is nationally recognised in the title of Master of Sport. Schur is at present attending the German Academy of Physical Culture and Sport in Leipzig, where he is not only developing his own talent, but preparing, if he so desires, to become a mentor of the younger generation when his own competitive days are ended.

By circumventing the stewards on duty I was able to round off this great sporting day pleasantly by making the acquaintance of some of the British riders while they were in the care of their trainer, Bill Shillibeer, after the day's exertions. Their unanimous opinion seemed to be that the pace and continuous attacking tactics throughout each stage of this race make it a really tough trial of fitness and stamina.

Results of Cycle Race

The team prize for winning the International Peace Cycle Race was taken by the Soviet Union, with Poland second, Belgium third and the German Democratic Republic fourth. Individual winners were Krolak (Poland) first, Dumitrescu (Rumania) second, and Kolumbet (USSR) third. Best British rider was Sanderson, who finished 15th.

ANTI – SEMITIC PUBLISHER

British Book Firms Suggest Boycott

(The British magazine "The Bookseller", organ of the Booksellers Association, has recently published a series of revealing letters on the anti-semitic and neo-nazi attitude of some West German publishers. On this page we reprint this interesting correspondence. The letters appeared in "The Bookseller" on March 17th and March 31st.)

Sir, — I have been offering for a long time the German rights in the famous P.O.W. escape story: "The Wooden Horse" by Eric Williams. The book has been a world success and was published in twelve languages in a total edition of 2½ million copies, but never in German.

When I recently offered the book to Hans Dulk Verlag of Hamburg I received a reply which may interest you as a typical example of Nazi spirit and aggressiveness reemerged to the surface. The letter reads as follows:

... "We would not refer to this book at all if it were not to tell you that we seriously hope you will find no (German) publisher for it: it is a completely untruthful and tendentious work, a string of obnoxious inventions, and we would not touch it with a barge-pole. The most disagreeable chapter in a book which is already bad enough, is the tone in which the 'courageous' Jew Sigmund boasts in Copenhagen of having waylaid and murdered many German soldiers.

"We do not know whether you are devoid of all feeling for what one can do and what one cannot do, and what one can expect from a German publisher and what not.

"We take it that you have read the book, since otherwise you cannot possibly have suggested that we should publish it. It does not surprise us that this book has even been published in the State of Israel: that is where it belongs."

Yours sincerely,
Robert Harben, Literary Agent
3 Church Vale
London N. 2

* * *

Sir, — I have read with interest the letter from Mr. Robert Harben in your issue of March 17th; the passages which he quotes from Messrs. Dulk's communication are indeed illuminating. As a gentile, may I urge through your columns that the British Publishers' Association ask the Publishers' Association of Western Germany whether it approves of Messrs. Dulk's antisemitic views and, if not, that it should formally dissociate itself from them in writing. If no such assurance is forthcoming, I urge that British publishers should forthwith sever all relations with German publishers, neither offering their books for sale in that country nor considering any German publications for possible translation into English .

Yours etc.
Desmond Flower, Cassell & Co., Ltd.
37 St. Andrews Hill, London E. C. 4
London

Sir, — It is sincerely to be hoped that Mr. Harben's insolent rebuff by a German publisher may have the salutary effect of stemming the spate of German war books which has cascaded on the English literary scene almost from the moment hostilities ceased.

Too many of our publishers — including, astonishingly and regrettably, some of the refugees from Nazism who have set up business here — seem to have been desperately eager to apotheosize in print Nazi generals, statesmen, doctors, financiers, spies, airmen, U-Boat Commanders, photographers and a variety of lesser fry among our erstwhile enemies.

Some of these books have been undisguised and blatant apologias for nazism, others have been insolently patronising and derogatory of our prowess in the war. Yet they invariably received good notices from the reviewers, and not a few achieved best-sellerdom.

We have exalted and romanticised some of Hitler's vilest henchmen as 'honourable foes', and we have glorified as popular heroes Luftwaffe pilots who bombed our open cities, U-Boat Commanders who machine-gunned our drowning sailors, and highranking Nazi diplomats who intrigued to bring Britain to her knees.

For my own personal reasons I have never bought or publicised any German books, but let not my attitude be misconstrued as a duplication of that of the German publisher who turned down the war book of my friend Eric Williams. The war literature which we can offer to the Germans is a war literature of a nation with clean hands not befouled by the grossest crimes against humanity in the world's history. To publish these books should be a privilege for Germans and indeed they might well derive some benefit from them. Unfortunately the reverse is not the case.

Yours faithfully
Mark Goulden, W. H. Allen & Co.
43 Essex Street
London W. C. 2

School Children and the Jewish Question

A public opinion poll conducted by the West German newspaper "Welt" shows that 61 percent of 18-year-old schoolboys and girls in West Germany either approve of Hitler's policy of liquidating the Jews, or have a "neutral attitude".

The results of the poll, published in the newspaper on February 25th, showed that 12% of those asked gave their active support to the nazi racial policy, stating that the Jews were "racial pests", and using other nazi terms of hate. 49% of the children polled adopted a neutral attitude, neither approving nor condemning the nazi pogroms, and only 39% of the children were critical of nazi policy.

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Three Soviet Divisions to Leave Germany

Three Soviet air divisions, totalling more than 30,000 men, will be withdrawn from the German Democratic Republic and demobilised in the course of the next twelve months, as part of the great all-round reduction in Soviet armed forces, it was announced in Moscow on May 14th. The total reduction in the Soviet armed forces will amount to 1,200,000 men in the next year, the announcement said.

It was recalled in Berlin that the Soviet Government has repeatedly in the past suggested that all foreign troops should be withdrawn from both German states.

BERLIN NOTEBOOK

By John Peet

Some readers of GERMAN REPORT have shockingly long memories. A couple of years ago I made some passing remark in this notebook about pottering round in my little garden, and, if I remember rightly, about planting tulips. And now, after all this time, a correspondent wants to know how the garden is doing.

Since I try to be truthful, I must say that the garden is all right, but rather shaggy. Like many other people I only get gardening enthusiasm in fits and starts (and rather short fits at that) so that the little garden is never likely to be reproduced in full natural colour on the cover of a gardening paper.

Tulips Thief

And talking about the tulips, I regret to say that last year's crop were all stolen just as they began to bloom: we report on another page that the crime rate has been halved in the German Democratic Republic, so I am afraid that the tulip robber is one of the hitherto unreformed ones.

However, this year the tulips are blossoming bravely, even if they are a little late ,and up to the time of writing no-one has pilfered them.

Anyway, to get back to work, I was sitting in the garden on a recent sunny day, glancing through magazines and newspapers which had come in the mail, when I encountered a pocket-book thriller, with one of those glaring and unlikely covers, sent to me by a reader in Britain.

I was a little surprised, for readers do not generally send me thrillers. But when I leafed through the book I saw that it was a thriller about Berlin, so I settled down to read it.

Bad Book

It was an American book "No Grave for March" by M. E. Chaber, published in England by Eyre and Spottiswoode, and reprinted as a pocket book by Corgi Books, and I have rarely read a worse one. The ingredients were the usual ones for this type of story — brutality, murder and suspense, leavened with liberal slabs of sex.

The author had set his story in the Berlin of today, and his "hero" was an American spy sent on a mission to East Berlin, and I found a certain ludicrous appropriateness in sitting in East Berlin on a quiet Sunday morning, reading what an American author presented to his public as a picture of what usually happens in East Berlin on quiet Sunday mornings.

But that is not the point I want to get at. What is interesting about this poisonous book is the attitude of the author towards espionage, violence and murder, so long as it is used by the American intelligence authorities. The hero of the book, for instance, commits two cold blooded murders and kidnaps seven people (I may have lost count here); but it's quite all right. The victims are East Germans (bad) or Communists (even worse) so there is no harm in killing or kidnapping them.

It is also interesting to note that a big part is played in the book by RIAS, the American radio station in West Berlin: the American agent gets his instructions radioed to him by this station, and the station supplies a gang of armed thugs at one stage in the book. GERMAN REPORT has often described RIAS as an American spy agency: we did not really expect to get confirmation from an American thriller.

But I must admit I got one laugh out of this horrid book. That was the scene where the American spy hero was seduced by a beautiful blonde girl, a member of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party. I am sorry to have to report that the Central Committee has many very excellent members, but not one even remotely resembling a luscious blonde.

Democratic
GERMAN REPORT

Subscription rates: 4 marks, 8/- sterling, $ 1.25 per annum or pro rata, postage paid.

Subscriptions may be paid at the following addresses:

Democratic Germany: At all post offices.

Britain: Collet's Subscription Dept, 45 Museum St. London W. C. 1

All other communications should be addressed to:

Democratic German Report,
Friedrichstrasse 167 III,
Berlin W 8,
Germany.

Before closing the book I noted that the same publishers had issued a book called "I Flew for the Fuehrer". It was a fitting stable mate.

Visit Visas

I have recently received a number of letters from readers in Britain and other countries who would like to visit the German Democratic Republic and want to know how to go about it. Most of my correspondents point out that they can travel freely to West Germany, France, Italy and other countries, and they cannot understand why it should be so difficult to visit East Germany.

Though I sympathise with their feelings, I must point out that the main obstacle to the development of ordinary tourist traffic between Britain and the German Democratic Republic is the simple fact that the British Government has stubbornly refused to recognise the Republic, although the authorities in Berlin are perfectly ready to open normal diplomatic and consular relations at any time.

As a result there is no consulate of the German Democratic Republic in London which could issue visas, and there have been no talks between the two governments which could ease the way to an exchange of tourists.

High Horse

Special arrangements have been made by the Government of the German Democratic Republic to grant visas to various categories of visitors, such as journalists, businessmen, trade union delegations, but I am afraid that any big extension of private tourist traffic will have to wait until the British Government (and other western governments) get down off their high horse and recognise that the German Democratic Republic is in fact a going concern.

Incidentally, the obstacles to travel are by no means all on one side. Citizens of the German Democratic Republic find it extremely difficult to get a British visa to visit friends in Britain, and British visas have also been refused to scientists invited to attend conferences in Britain.

If the British Government could take the first step by recognising the German Democratic Republic I am sure it would be relatively easily to iron out any other difficulties in the way of a really big-scale exchange of visits.

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